



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1037NY-1 for Union-Endicott Central School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Application describes a joint proposal between two districts to support their shift to the common core standards, and increase student achievement and supports to schools in an area experiencing fiscal challenges due to local industry loss.</p> <p>To meet core standard one, the adoption of the common core is intended to put students on a college-ready path. To increase the districts' ability to personalize instruction, they intend to address the entire K-12 pipeline by: revising their high school course offerings; creating a 9th – 12 grade "sustainability" academy; implementing a K-12 literacy initiative; a K-8 math initiative; and a joint venture to connect parents and community to improve attendance for high risk populations.</p> <p>For the second standard related to data systems, the application cites the need to develop both technological and pedagogical capacity to implement frequent formative and summative assessments, and to analyze data linked down to students that further link to their teachers of record. Both districts belong to a data warehouse system. To leverage their data capacity, the application cites desire to increase the ability to effectively use data, and to develop individualized learning portfolios for every student, to be analyzed within professional learning communities.</p> <p>For the human capital strand, the application cites that while both districts do not have teacher pipeline issues, they do see a need to increase their current teacher core through rewards and professional development. They recently received a grant from the NY DOE to identify a cadre of effective teachers to act as coaches for teachers that need to improve.</p> <p>To turn around struggling schools, the district will target narrowing gaps for special education students, and gaps between African American and White students, as they do not have any schools that fall under the formal definition of failing schools. They plan to address these gaps by increasing their use of differentiated instruction, and through the programs described in core area one.</p> <p>Individualization is further outlined with in-depth description of the above-mentioned K-12 programs. The emphasis is on STEM content, but adds the letter "A" to include the Arts. Individualization is found throughout program approaches by focusing on smaller schools and academies, and providing programs with student selected pathways like Early College High Schools.</p> <p>The plan leverages STEM and Arts education by pairing the two together, and brings in a number of parent and community partners.</p> <p>The vision contains a lot of great elements, but it does not set forth a clear and coherent plan that explains how the components will be executed.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application explains that all schools were selected for the program as it represent a systemic K-12 approach. All schools are listed with enrollment counts, and the free-and-reduced-lunch program (FRSL) across the consortium is 47%. Not clear how many participating educators.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan intends to cover the K-12 pipeline within two similar and neighboring districts. The Consortium is designed to share resources and build capacity within both district systems. This section does not explain how the programs will lead to stated</p>		

goals, but the previous section did provide thorough descriptions.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application uses information from the next section to also support this section of the vision. The goals stated are ambitious and achievable and were stated at the beginning of the application; by 2016 they will increase graduation to 90%; raise ELA and math proficiency to 80%; cut ELA and math gaps in half; and increase attendance to 95%. No mention of college-going rates, and no detail on how the proposed activities will meet these goals. Additionally, having the application spell out where current performance is in relationship to the stated goals would be more instructive.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Aggregated performance improvement is presented in the application. Chemistry regents exams increased from 74% to 92% between 2003 and 2005, and remains in the high 80s and 90s. While this increase is positive, the exact data presented dates back to 2003 through 2005. More exact data between 2005 and 2010, rather than approximations, would have made performance trends more clear.

Graduation rates have increased by 20%, course failure rates dropped by 25% , and classification rate, an undefined term in the application, dropped 70% over a three-year period for one district. Again, while this is a positive trend, it cites a "three-year-period," but is unclear how current that trend is. There is not much specific information about performance improvement by each district, or in categories that are not aggregated to high levels. The application does not address B1(a), pertaining to trends around achievement gaps.

Student performance data is available in both districts through student management systems that include parent portals. An annual school report card is provided by the state.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Budget development is transparent through statute and through participation in a RTTT application awarded to the state. Personnel salaries are stated to be maintained by a local newspaper, and a monthly treasurer's report is provided at open board meetings. Budget documents are stated to be a part of public record and available for access and review, although this approach does not outline a very proactive mechanism for transparency.

Most of these communication mechanisms are driven by state policies, as stated in the application. The districts' approach to information sharing does not move much beyond what is minimally required, and is relatively passive. The fact that salaries are gathered and published by a newspaper rather than the district is an example of a process that is not optimally transparent.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Both districts are governed by elected school boards, and the application asserts that the state grants districts flexibility in the areas of textbook selection, class schedule, class size, staffing, and length of the day. The state requires districts to use a "shared decision making" model. Since these districts are not in "improvement" status, the application cites that the districts can operate and execute the proposed program with autonomy. However, it is unclear whether the district does have autonomy over people time and money to create more personalized learning environments.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Various stakeholders, including local higher education institutions, were involved in the development of this proposal. Union members, as well as board of trustees associated with each district, signed the Memorandum of Agreement. Numerous support letters are included in the application. District personnel were involved with creating the proposal by participation on a steering committee, and through staff surveys.

Parent and community engagement is mentioned minimally. Parents were informed during a PTA Council; a one-time opportunity that may not include a wide range of the parent community.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Gaps are identified as existing between students with disabilities and those without; Black and White students, and economically disadvantaged vs. non disadvantaged. Those gaps are identified for each district in both ELA and math. The gaps are further broken out by subjects on the Regents exams, AYP, and then through downward trends in proficiency rates over time for those groups, as well as for students labeled Limited English Proficiency. Note the trends over time are difficult to read as they move opposite of how are typically displayed, but, do show a relatively dramatic negative trend. The data is not as detailed as it could be, but do bring out the districts' performance concerns.

The application attributes some of these gaps to loss of services due to the area's fiscal losses over the past three years. The application cites that increasing the ability to differentiate instruction; restructure their curriculum, assessment, and professional development; and focus on teaching the whole child, will address those gaps. These changes, they propose, will be catalyzed by improving pedagogy for implementing the common core, and to improve the classroom environment, with particular attention paid to the early grades.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	12

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application cites several resources to guide personalized student-centered learning and make it cross-disciplinary through STEM instructional techniques and program planning. A detailed flow chart on how the four years would be laid out for the STEM pathway, which addresses grades 9 – 12, illustrate how the plan connects closely to college and career readiness.

The programs mentioned earlier in the application are described in detail in this section. They each entail having teams of various teachers, sometimes partnered with higher education institutions and sometimes with students, develop project-based content (mainly at secondary level), and intensive math and writing projects designed with rigor, real-world connections, and a focus on individualization. Instruction in these programs is designed as whole group as well as small group to deepen opportunities for understanding content.

To further ensure teachers are able to differentiate instruction, coaches will support development in that area, and an RTI approach will be used.

Students with special needs are primarily taught within the general classroom setting where classes are co-taught by general and special education teachers at all grade levels.

Students and their teachers will have access to an electronic portfolio system, where they can monitor progress and access support. Students will also be formed into small groups of "critical friends" to help them with portfolio development and management. What is to be included in each portfolio will be decided by a project Steering Committee.

Through their partnership with Catholic Charities, each school will have parent partners to assist with helping increase attendance.

Almost every area required was addressed in the application, except the areas of access to information about diverse cultures, which may be embedded elsewhere, particularly the art program. No reference was directly made to other non-core subject skills such as perseverance or working in teams. However, those skills are embedded within STEM instruction as it requires students to work in teams on project-based assigned that requires many higher order thinking skills. Additionally, working with students on monitoring and managing their own portfolios addresses those types of skills.

It was not quite clear which grade-levels would use STEM teaching and project-based learning. Grades 9-12 are cited for STEM or STEAM instruction (adding art), but it was not clear whether earlier grades will use this type of instructional

approach.

Overall, much of the activities are explained in general, but it is unclear how they will be executed. Additionally, there is little mention of how and when data will be collected and analyzed to monitor program and student progress.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

17

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application lists a number of support mechanisms for teachers and leaders, and provides great detail on planned professional development to ensure strong implementation of their plan. Those mechanisms include:

- Instructional leadership teams that will map out the curriculum and share best practice information
- Superintendent's Advisory Council to provide a learning community for administrators to enhance their professional growth
- Building Planning Teams to identify the unique needs of each school
- Annual Professional Performance Review Plan, aligned w/ the NY State teaching standards, to provide feedback and goal setting mechanisms between professionals and supervisors.
- Planned professional development in a number of areas, to include planning, data use, assessment, and subject-related training.
- Writing improvement coaches to provide ongoing embedded professional development in writing.
- Secondary Writing Lab for high school students access individualized writing assistance.
- Math Tier 2 intervention kit and math coaches.
- Multi-Dimensional Principal Performance Rubric to assist principals in setting annual goals and targets.

Specific training and goals for core subject coaches was clearly laid out in table format, addressing specific focus areas for grade spans and subjects. The table also includes training for coaches that work with special needs students, and clearly identifies training targets, such as implementing formative assessments, and suspension reduction.

The application also describes a specific professional develop model to be applied to trainings called the "roll through model," which provides short targeted tasks within a subject to be taught in regular 60 and 90 minute segments. In practice, substitutes would cover one grade level, and teachers would attend intensive training on one skill within a broader task, like how to teach students to write effective conclusions. Topics are selected based on data, and students receive an explanation on why they are practicing that particular skill when teachers begin applying it in the classroom.

While there are specific professional development activities mentioned, it is unclear how these strategies will connect and be aligned to student and teacher needs. Additionally, there was little mention of a high quality plan to ensure students have effective teachers.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium is governed by a Board Advisory Team, comprised of members of each district's Board, the full STEAM ahead steering committee, district and building administration, teachers, and parents and community members.

Instructional leadership teams guide the work at the building level, and comprise of administrative and teaching staff.

Building planning teams at each school level are in place to solve issues related to school performance and link their efforts with various instructional leaders and support positions such as guidance counselors.

A comprehensive Instructional Improvement process is detailed, and involves each district using multiple indicators, including assessment and survey data, to monitor student progress. The process includes guidelines for participating, and for making shared decisions.

Parents are involved with the project through active participation with various district and school teams.

The entire Consortium is governed by an MOU that outlines responsibilities in each of the program areas described, and within the four core focus areas in this grant. Additionally, the MOU explains the roles of the Steering Committee, comprised of each district's superintendent, assistant superintendent, chief information officer, a union representative, and three administrative

members appointed by the superintendents.

The Steering Committee will create a position to oversee the entire project in the form of a Project Director.

General detail is provided on various governance structures, and shared decision-making processes. How students will process through grade-levels was not addressed.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

10

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application outlines supports for teachers, as well as for parents, through the Parent Partners Program. The parent program provides coaching, support personnel, and service providers to ensure parents are supported and that students regularly attend school. Additionally, all students in both districts at all grade levels will be provided tablet computers to ensure equitable access to technology and the internet. The school libraries will be made accessible to parents, and teachers are to be available to parents and students both before and after school.

Parent portals allow parents to review curriculum and their child's progress, and regular progress report will be posted on the districts' websites on a regular basis.

Teachers have their own web pages on the district website to provide information about their classes, and to communicate with stakeholders.

Both districts appear to have robust data systems that are managed by a Chief Information Officer and data teams. The districts are exploring potential information management systems that will bring all their data sources together within a single-sign-on system.

Data is also shared through regular data meetings with various school level stakeholders, through data walk-throughs where staff collaborate to analyze student data, and one district is participating in a performance management initiative where they use results-targeted goals to monitor performance.

The creation of the Portfolio project will further enhance data and progress sharing capabilities.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Continuous improvement is monitored through four main mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLCs meet with data coaches every 10 weeks to review progress toward performance goals and make recommendations to the Steering Committee, who will advise the project coordinator and staff of any needed adjustments. • The governance structure described earlier in the application and in the above point. • APPR process (unclear what it stands for) that uses data analysis, observation, reflection, and action-research to review performance. • Roll-through professional development model <p>The four pieces are implemented through a five-step improvement process outlined in the application. While mechanisms for sharing data were included in previous sections, it was not clear how some of the evaluation data would be shared outside of the district.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>PLCs, site based management teams, and the governance structures are designed to solicit ongoing input, share information, and engage various stakeholders in planning and decision-making processes. Other communication strategies were outlined in previous sections in this application, to include a number of online communication sources.</p>		

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The main performance measures selected for this project are the state exams, selected for their availability and because the program stakeholders are familiar with them. Attendance rate is also selected as a performance measure, because that is a target area for the program.</p> <p>There are no assessments prior to grade 3, no assessments identified that measure non-cognitive skills, nor is there mention of how adjustments will be made if the described tools do not yield appropriate or enough data.</p> <p>There do not appear to be 12 to 14 performance measures listed in this section, however, the next section on program evaluation lists a number of evaluation tools to include classroom observations, interviews, and surveys.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A thorough evaluation is described to assess the various inputs of the proposed program, and the overall success of the program in meeting stated goals. An array of quantitative and qualitative methods are described for assessing implementation fidelity, student performance, classroom observations, surveys to measure engagement levels, the quality of professional development, and project satisfaction.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application outlines the total budgets of each district, and provides an estimate of costs associated with sustaining the project. Because the project would involve redeploying a number of existing staff, sustainability costs would be reduced somewhat. No mention of other funding mechanisms to sustain the project past this grant.</p> <p>Data collection and training associated with this project are stated to be partially funded by the state, and a Teacher Leader grant would be leveraged for the project as well.</p> <p>The budget narrative is very detailed and clear, as is the \$\$ allotted for each line item, including whether each expense is a one-time or ongoing cost.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Post grant, the application states that recapturing regular operating revenues will contribute to sustaining the project past the grant, and that the NY state Governor is aggressively seeking alternate funding, potentially through a number of local private foundations. The application cites annual sustainability costs to be \$1.8 million, which is already reflected in existing staff in the budget. No specific sustainability budget was included. There is no mention of how other components of the program would be supported, or if any other funding resources would be pursued to sustain the program.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>None included.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

This proposal describes a project that aims to improve implementation of the common core curriculum through a variety of program interventions targeted across the K-12 pipeline. Created through a consortium of two similar and neighboring districts, the Consortium will leverage and combine its assets and expertise to change teaching and learning in the district, with a focus on STEM programs and teaching that also includes the Arts. The program includes many supports to further develop leaders and teachers, and raise student achievement, with a particular emphasis on closing gaps.

The application is clear, and describes a coherent, well-thought out program.

Total	210	151
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1037NY-2 for Union-Endicott Central School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies four common goals that have been identified by both school districts for achievement by 2016, including increasing the graduation rate, the overall percentage of students earning proficient scores in ELA and Math, cutting by 50% the gaps in ELA and Math performance between subgroups, and increasing attendance to 95% overall.

The applicant explicitly addresses each of the four core assurances and describes how its proposal addresses each one. For example, both districts are addressing the goals of student achievement and deepening student learning as they work with the regional Educational Service Agency and Race To The Top Network Term in cooperation with the New York State Education Department to accomplish reform-related objectives with the state-level Race To The Top grant. The two districts propose a transdisciplinary vision with intense focus on modifying and enhancing high school offerings and learning environment through creation of a Sustainability Academy.

The goal of increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests is addressed by the applicant in the proposed individualized learning portfolios that every student would create.

The two districts report that neither has experienced challenges with attracting highly qualified teachers or teacher shortages. The applicant also notes that neither district is under any level of improvement status under NCLB or the New York Schools ESEA Waiver. The applicant proposes focusing efforts on professional development for teachers identified as ineffective or developing, as well as closing gaps among student populations through differentiated instruction provided with individualized support.

The applicant's vision focuses on preparing all students for college- and career-paths and changing the way subject content is taught to strengthen the number of students pursuing STEM-related careers.

The applicant clearly articulates its vision and proposes five specific projects where its efforts will be focused, including the Sustainability Academy, The Writing Project, The Math Project, The Parent Partnership, and The Portfolio Project.

The applicant clearly portrays a comprehensive and coherent reform vision grounded in the four assurances, and linked to the goals of increased student achievement, deeper student learning, and increased equity for all students through personalized learning supports.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant includes two districts, Union-Endicott School District and Johnson City Central School District, which are geographically contiguous and demographically similar public school districts in central New York state. The applicant explains that, after several combined school district meetings with key stakeholders, the decision was made to include all schools in each district.

(b) The proposed activities would occur in all schools in the two districts, including 6 schools in the Union-Endicott School District and 4 schools in the Johnson City Central School District. The applicant provides the name of each school and the student enrollment of each school.

(c) The total number of participating students is over 6,500, with 47% of these students from low-income families. The applicant does not identify the total number of high need students and participating educators.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes that the first year of funding be used as a planning and start-up year with full-scale implementation beginning in year two. The applicant does not present a high-quality plan, including the required elements of key goals, activities and rationale for the activities, timeline, deliverables, and responsible, to allow the reader to determine how the proposed activities would be scaled up and translated into meaningful district-wide change that would help the applicant reach its articulated goals. The applicant presents a logic model and goals to support meaningful reform to accomplish outcome goals.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not present a compelling case that its proposed projects will result in the projected increases in proficiency on state summative assessments or attendance rates. The applicant presents targets that are quite ambitious, yet no evidence is provided to convince the reader that the projected gains are achievable. For example, only 47% of 3rd grade students scored at a proficient level on the ELA exam in 2011-12. The applicant projects that this will increase to 55% by 2012-13 and 63% by 2013-14 when the only project that specifically addresses this score is the addition of Writing Instruction Coaches, and introduction of tablets and electronic portfolios. Similarly, the applicant proposes that the percentage of high school students on track to college- and career-readiness will increase from 44% (2010-11) to 60% in 2015-16 based on Regents ELA and Math scores; yet, the only projects specifically addressing these areas are The Sustainability Academy (focused on environmental sciences) and The Writing Project. The applicant does not specifically address graduation rates or college-going rates.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	11

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a clear record of success by highlighting recent grant activity, including participation in the state's Race

to the Top initiative, a Reading First grant, a Safe Schools Healthy Students (SHARE) grant. The applicant highlights its partnership with Binghamton University in STEM K-12 that has advanced student learning and achievement, as demonstrated on increases in percentages of students passing the Chemistry Regents Exam. The graduation rate has increased by almost 10% in the Union-Endicott schools through the No Tiger Left Behind effort, begun with a grant from the Community Foundation of the Southern Tier and sponsorship by the Rensselaerville Institute. The applicant has successfully removed schools from NCLB low-performing status by increasing student achievement and graduation rates. Student performance data are available to parents through a parent portal and New York State annually publishes a School Report Card for each school which includes data on student performance at the subgroup level. These report cards are published on the NYSED website and the websites of each district.

The applicant does not address its past success with college enrollment rates or how student performance data are made available to students or educators. The applicant does not address how student performance data are made available to students, parents, or educators with limited internet access.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant explains that public school district budgets are voted upon by the public annually in May. As part of the process of developing budgets, public forums and presentations are made at various community groups before the state-mandated publication of the budget is mailed no less than 7 days before the vote date. A simple majority vote is required. New York schools are in year one of implementing an Annual Professional Performance Appraisal, and parents will be granted access to teacher evaluation ratings by contacting the school administration directly.

The applicant reports that a local Gannett daily newspaper maintains a database of salaries for all public employees, including school districts, searchable by name and/or title.

The applicant fails to include a description of the extent to which it already makes available the four categories of school-level expenditures from State and local funds.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The two school districts are public school districts governed by a popularly elected Board of Trustees with decision-making power. A certain degree of flexibility is possible given the ESEA and Title 1 waivers. Both districts subscribe to collective bargaining processes with several internal bargaining units, and New York State is a Race to the Top Phase 2 State. Both districts utilize a Shared Decision Making Model. The applicant demonstrates its ability and autonomy to implement personalized learning environments.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes how students, families, teachers and principals were engaged in the development of the proposal. For example, the proposal was shared with student governments at the secondary level in both school districts, and it was presented at PTA Council. Teachers participated through building faculty meetings and members of the collective bargaining unit and representatives from the Board of Trustees and the Administration signed the Memorandum of Agreement. The work to develop the proposal was led by an eight-member steering committee of administrators from both districts.

Letters of support are presented from a variety of key stakeholders, including Broome Community College, State University of New York, Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce, Broome County Family Violence Prevention Council, Broome County Department of Social Services, Union-Endicott Student Government President, Union-Endicott Council of PTAs, and New York Commissioner of Education.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant fails to present a high-quality plan for an analysis of its current status in implementing personalized learning environments. The required elements of the high-quality plan are not described.

It is evident that the applicant has analyzed available data to determine its current status and challenge. The applicant presents data to demonstrate achievement gaps among subgroups of students, most notably for students with disabilities and gaps between white students and black students across most performance areas in both districts. The applicant notes that proficiency rates at almost all grade levels in both districts are trending downward over time for three specific subgroups, including black students, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient students. While these gaps are identified, the applicant does not present a plan for reform that addresses these identified concerns related to the downward trending proficiency rates among these identified subgroups.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	8
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant grounds its proposed activities in research that supports personalized trans-disciplinary STEM learning. The applicant proposes a Sustainability Academy built on five key elements identified by Lantz, including (1) standards driven, (2) Understanding by Design principles, (3) Inquiry-based teaching and learning, (4) Problem-based learning, and (5) The 5E Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Cycle. The applicant clearly identifies the objectives of the Sustainability Academy that would be established in each high school.</p> <p>It is not clear how many students at the high school would participate in the Sustainability Academy since the applicant only states that a complete team of students would be recruited with a pilot model implemented in year two of the grant. While the Academy is focused on STEM related careers and college pathways, it is not clear how it supports college- and career-readiness for all learners, in particular high-need students. The applicant mentions project-based learning, use of technology, and field trips, as well as a major capstone projects completed by teams of seniors, but it is not clear how these approaches create personalized learning supports or increase student achievement.</p> <p>The Math and Writing Projects are designed to focus on grades K-8 and K-12 respectively. Individualized supports and focus on Common Core Standards would be offered by Math Coaches and Writing Improvement Coaches. Additionally, Math and ELA content experts are proposed to provide professional development to teachers and serve as peer coaches, while also working directly with small groups of students in Tier 2 Response to Intervention. A K-12 Electronic Portfolio System and Parent Partners Project complete the proposed projects.</p> <p>The applicant only describes each proposed project briefly, but it does not present a high quality plan, including key goals, activities and rationale, timelines, deliverables, and key stakeholders for the proposed projects. The applicant fails to address how the proposed projects are responsive to high-need students or how frequently updated individual student data would be collected and used to monitor progress. It is not clear how personalized learning is built into the proposed projects or how technology, including the K-12 electronic portfolio system, would align with college- and career-ready standards. The applicant does not address what mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students to ensure understanding and use of tools and resources to help them track and manage their learning.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	8
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant proposes embedded staff development for teachers at all levels to be provided by six trained Writing Improvement Coaches (WICs). Each WIC will be assigned to support teachers in two grade levels across both districts after being recruited to serve in this capacity from among the district's highly effective teachers. Additionally, an after-school writing lab would be provided at the middle and high school with student transportation provided. The applicant proposes a K-8 Professional Learning Community to focus on student math achievement, as well as 4 math coaches for students in grades K-8. An afterschool model is also proposed to focus on math. Professional development focus areas are identified by the applicant for K-5 ELA, Math, and Science, as well as 6-12 ELA, Math, and Science. Special education topics are identified for K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Lastly, instructional technology topics are identified for K-5 and 6-12.</p>		

The applicant proposes a "roll through" model of professional development, has an annual performance review plan, and ties the proposed staff development to the work already in progress by state Race To The Top working groups.

Once again, the applicant broadly describes its plan to address improvement of instruction through several specific projects. No high-quality plan with the required elements is presented for the projects. It is not clear how the focused professional development would help leaders and administrators improve instruction. It is not clear how the proposed strategies will support implementation of personalized learning environments, or provide opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, interests, and optimal learning approaches. The applicant does not address progress monitoring or frequently measuring student progress or using data to inform practice. It is not clear how the LEAs' teacher and principal evaluation systems are tied to the proposed teaching and leading projects. Items (b), (c), and (d) are not directly addressed by the applicant.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	3
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant utilizes a Shared Decision Making framework, that includes Board Advisory Teams, Instructional Leadership Teams, and Building Planning Teams. The Building Planning Teams will exist in each school, and include PLC members, student government representatives, principal, community stakeholders, teachers, CSEA chair, parents, Math and ELA coaches, support personnel, guidance counselor, and others as determined necessary. Team membership will be voluntary, and the team will participate in shared decision-making with other entities.</p> <p>Both districts signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Union-Endicott acting as the Lead LEA. The members of the project steering committee include both district superintendents, assistant superintendents, chief information officers, representatives from each district's teachers' bargaining unit and parent organization, and three other administrative members of each district appointed by the superintendent. The Project Director will provide leadership for the proposed grant. The districts will meet at least three times per year in person and monthly teleconferences will be held.</p> <p>The applicant does not address items (c), (d), and (e) listed in this criterion so a low score is awarded.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides support to teachers and educators through the proposed coaches, PLCs, and mentoring components of the grant. The Parent Partners Program provides coaching and support service providers to assist parents and students. The applicant proposes providing all students in grades K-12 in both districts with a tablet computer so they have equitable access to technology tools and the internet. Parents will be invited and encouraged to use the school library, and PTO and school-related support groups will be provided. Parents are represented on the governing body, content level professional learning communities, and building level teams.</p> <p>The applicant does not address the levels of technical support available, other than mentioning that both districts employ a Chief Information Officer.</p> <p>The applicant reports that both districts are exploring web-based content management systems and learning management systems, and they are working with the state's Race To The Top Network Team to meet the state's data and interoperability objectives. No specific information is provided regarding current data systems formats, features, or capabilities.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	2

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), governance structures and functions, the APPR process, and the roll through professional development model as the mechanisms for continuous improvement. While a brief description is provided of PLCs and APPR, the applicant does not clearly explain how these mechanisms will provide timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements.

The applicant does not explain how it will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)

5

1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant relies on existing and proposed governance structures and functions, as well as the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement, to address this criterion. No specific strategies for communicating and engaging with internal and external stakeholders are specifically presented.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to use statewide assessments for performance measures since they are readily available, familiar to stakeholders, and longitudinal data are available. Only attendance data are proposed as a measure of social/emotional indicators.

The applicant states that data from the 2012-13 school year will be used as baseline data for the project since the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) was just approved by the New York Schools Education Department in August 2012. No data is provided regarding highly effective teachers and principals.

Performance measures for K-3 include attendance and 3rd grade Math and ELA proficiency percentages. Performance measures for grades 4-8 include attendance and Math, ELA, and Science proficiency percentages. For grades 9-12, performance measures include completion of the FAFSA form, ELA and Math Regents scores, graduation rates, Regents Living Environment scores, and attendance.

The applicant does not address how these annual data sources will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern or how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

No projected targets are provided for attendance rates for any grade bands. The applicant does not provide a rationale for using the Regents Living Environment composite test scores as a Performance Measure since all students will not be participants in the proposed Sustainability Academy.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to contract with an external evaluator to assess the effectiveness of the funded activities. The applicant identifies both qualitative and quantitative measures that would be included in the external evaluation.

The Project Coordinator will provide PLC teams, building teams, and leadership teams with quarterly data analysis reports.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	3
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		

The applicant requests \$19,881,579.16 to support the proposed grant activities, with most of the funds allocated for personnel and fringe benefits.

The applicant indicates that no other sources will be used to support the project, though both districts receive some funding from the New York Schools Education Department for the state's Race To The Top plan.

The budget proposal is organized around 6 projects, and no equipment with a value over \$5,000 has been proposed.

The applicant notes that the allocation for Supplies includes the purchase of tablet computers for every student in both districts at the rate of \$599 each, along with portfolio software licenses for every student.

Contractual costs include (1) Broome County Office of Catholic Charities to conduct the Parent Partners Project, (2) Trainers for Sustainability Academy, Math and Writing Projects, (3) Stipends for Instructional Staff, and (4) Outside evaluation.

The indirect cost recovery rate is 2.3%.

A project-level budget narrative is not provided. The applicant does not propose how it will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments offered by the tablet purchases in terms of maintenance, refurbishments, repairs, or licenses when the grant expires.

It is noted that very little money is requested for curricular resources or supplies to support the proposed writing and math projects.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan to sustain the project after funding has ended. The applicant only states that an additional \$900,000 will be needed annually to support the effort during the post-grant years. The only plan offered by the applicant is regular operating revenues and the potential of securing private foundation grants.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The applicant does not respond to the Competitive Preference Priority.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: The applicant proposes to address all grade bands in all schools in two districts. It proposes to increase student learning and achievement through creation of a Sustainability Academy in the high schools, writing coaches for K-12, math coaches for K-8, purchase of tablets for every student and use of electronic learning portfolios to personalize learning.		

Total	210	91
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1037NY-3 for Union-Endicott Central School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The applicant presents a strong vision of reform that is grounded in their history as high-performing districts that are facing some difficult economic challenges and see new learning approaches as important for college and career readiness of their students (2 points). The applicant has presented four high-level goals that are specific and also seem achievable (1 point). The approach is balanced to include both data-driven processes and professional learning communities (1 point). The data program is tied to the state's longitudinal data system, which is an important infrastructural component and aligns this work with the state's Race to the Top initiatives (1 point). The applicants do not have any schools that are low performing as defined by NCLB, but they do present evidence that they have achievement gaps that are important to close (1 point). The proposal to create a Sustainable Academy that combines literacy (broadly defined) with authentic problem-based learning and can use digital tools that are currently available (1 point). This component is based on a logic model that is clear (1 point). Where the vision is less successful is in bringing these different components together into a single program structure. This part of the proposal lacks cohesion between otherwise strong elements.</i></p> <p>Total 8/10</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The approach to implementation does list the participating schools and their enrollments (2 points). The rationale presented is to include all schools in a district-wide initiative (2 points). The proposal does not, however, include a description of the total number of participating students from low-income families, who are high-need students (as defined in this notice), and participating educators. References were made to charts at the end of the section that would include demographics, but this reviewer did not find them there.</p> <p>Total 4/10</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has included the beginning of a plan to support meaningful goals of student achievement and graduation (1 point). The dual district approach is important as many districts in the nation are small and the pooling together not only student bodies, but also the of administrative structures represent an approach that this reviewer believes is important (2 points). Although presented in an earlier section, the proposal does include goals. It also includes a logic model for part of the intervention (2 points). The application, however, is weak in details about an LEA-wide reform and change process. The plan that is presented does not achieve a high-quality status as it does not include any deliverables and timeframes or many of the details that would allow a reviewer to evaluate its likelihood of success.</p> <p>Total 5/10</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	1
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While there are discussions of goals elsewhere in the application, not enough detail is presented in this section to allow significant credit.</p>		

Total 1/10

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	4
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has presented a list of important successes in both student achievement and program execution (4 points). However, there is substantial detail that is not provided to evidence a track record of success over the past four years. The data tables that would show that progress are not included. There is not four years of data, as required by this criteria, presented in another form. It is not possible, therefore to see how the applicants have closed achievement gaps raised student achievement, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment. Since the districts do not have persistently low-performing schools this part does not apply. There is little evidence of how the applicants will make student performance data more available/accessible. Total 4/15		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has provided evidence of a transparent LEA structure with the availability of both salary and performance data at several levels, including district, school, and individual teacher (5 points).		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has provided evidence of the conditions required for successful implementation in terms of autonomy and state status (10 points). This is evidenced by the discussion of the nature of district autonomy and relationship to the state educational administration. Further, this applicant is actively involved in the state's RttT efforts indicating strong and ongoing working relationships necessary for successful implementation. Total 10/10		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has provided evidence of stakeholder engagement and support. They have discussed the approach taken to elicit input and have presented a solid set of support letters (8 points). This reviewer was unable to find evidence that the teachers unions or a majority of the teachers endorsed this plan nor was there evidence the plan was shaped by stakeholder input. Total 8/10		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
(B)(5) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has provided evidence of achievement gaps and a thoughtful analysis of the relationship between those gaps and instructional supports (3 points). The application does not provide a strong evidence of the status of personalized learning environments in their districts today. Total 3/5		

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	14

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has produced a detailed set of initiatives, often based in appropriate research that address the issues of learning relevant to college and careers. This plan shows a good understanding of the differences between traditional and personalized instruction (3 points). This is an important grounding in the paradigmatic shift necessary for a personalized learning approach. The applicant has developed a good approach to STEM learning that, while light on some detail, is grounded in important and relevant research (3 points). The applicant has included some sample plans for students advancing through different grades and focusing on different areas. While this is a sample, it shows a good grasp of the kinds of organizational issues that this program could entail (3 points). Further, the discussion of the Sustainability Academy and the Math/Writing Project connection are excellent examples of the kind of detailed attention to learning that will be required to be successful. Finally, the applicant's focus on an Electronic portfolio is important. While the technological work that they will need to address is likely more extensive than described, the applicant shows an understanding of the importance of technology in making this ambitious program successful (3 points). The applicant also addresses family issues in the area of learning. While not expected, it is appropriate to the proposal and adds to the strength of it (2 points). The application could be stronger in how these elements are integrated and in how detailed about specific learning challenges in a project-based trans-disciplinary program will be overcome. Also, more information about how the students will be provided with regular, rolling feedback and attention to high-needs students will be helpful.

Total 14/20

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents evidence of a well reasoned plan for teaching and leading. The plan addresses the organizational dimensions of instructional activity (2 points). It has multiple organizational structures from grade-level and departmental teams (both are important) and superintendent's councils and others that show a systemic commitment (2 points). It includes descriptions of ongoing meeting forums that district staff is engaged in as part of the state's RtT grant (2 points). This is important because it helps to connect these district initiatives to other ongoing work related to the state context. These meetings also include many on the subject of specific assessments. This reviewer finds this extremely important as the assessments become the backbone of any reform effort (2 points). The applicant has provided thoughtful descriptions of the work that literacy/writing coaches (2 points) and math coaches will play in this project (2 points). Both of these positions are important to delivering change in schools. The element of sharing coaches between the districts is also important evidence of the collaborative nature of this proposal (1 point). The applicant has provided a thoughtful and well reasoned approach to data use and integrating data practices into this reform (3 points). The plan could be stronger with greater specificity of how the different elements could work together in a coherent and unified way across these three school types and two districts.

Total 16/20

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has produced a description of a governance structure to provide support and services to the participating schools that works at multiple levels from the elected officials to the individual schools and instructional leadership teams (5 points). The LEA structures described in the proposal also discuss the ways that information and data can be used to inform specific decisions about student learning (3 points). Where the proposal is less successful is in describing these structures as they relate to the details of personalized learning. For example, there is little discussion over issues such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets. This part of the proposal does not discuss earning credits based on mastery and demonstrating mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. It does not describe how it provides learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.

Total 8/15

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has produced a plan for LEA and school infrastructure that does touch on issues of access to content, assuring technical support, and exchanging information through interoperable data systems (4 points). This reviewer finds that the response is not strong in the ways these infrastructures will support personalized learning. The details are often missing for the core areas that this part of the proposal should address. Total 4/10		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant places great emphasis on professional learning communities as the basis for the continuous improvement process drawing on the work of DuFour and others (6 points). While this is an important cornerstone supported by very appropriate research (that the applicant cites in a responsible way!), it is not sufficient in this reviewer's judgment for the continuous improvement process needs of this grant. It does not address the higher levels of the organizations at the district and the consortium and does not address issues such as district investments in professional development, technology, and staff. All of these areas are critically important for a continuous improvement approach. Total 6/10		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: There is a reference to an ongoing communication and engagement plan in the proposal (1 point). However, it provides little detail to support greater credit. Total 1/5		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has produced some performance measures and provided some discussion of why some were selected (2 points). The application did not provide sufficient detail and far fewer than 12 measures were presented in this section. Total 2/5		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: The application does include an evaluation plan that discusses how the professional learning communities will be a component in the evaluation (1 point). The plan, however, is weak in terms of specifics about methodologies used and data collected about the program and/or technology components. Total 1/5		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does present a budget both in narrative and tabular form (2 points). The budget is available at the project as well as overall level with significant detail (2 points). For a district at the low end of a funding range the budget is at the high end of the same range with little justification for that requested amount raising questions about how reasonable the budget is. Further, the applicant does not in this reviewer's judgment provide a thoughtful rationale for the investments and priorities from district and other sources and show how these investments are tied to personalized learning.</p> <p>Total 4/10</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provided a response to this section, but was of poor quality and not addressing the essential elements of this part of the solicitation.</p> <p>Total 0/10</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>No evidence of response to this preference found.</p> <p>Total 0/10</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The applicant has provided evidence in several parts of this proposal that it meets this requirement. Their approach does consider performance gaps and the role that personalized learning plays. They have described programs at elementary, middle, and high-school that will involve greater personalization. And, they have attended to issues of infrastructure in their proposal.</i></p>		

Total	210	104
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